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Allegiances

ShadowClan

Leader: Yarrowstar -*Tortie-and-white tom with pale green eyes. Has no mate or kits and is seen as lonely.*

Deputy: Finchfur -*Odd-eyed black she-cat with a dark splash of russet on her chest. Is very harsh and unforgiving.*

Medicine Cat: Larkshine - *Strange black tom with a white chest and belly.*

Warriors

Sootstreak
White tom with patches of black on his back.

Deerfeather
Pale brown she-cat with lighter spots and green eyes.

Addernose
Gray tom with white spots and yellow eyes.

Pinebark
Dark brown-and-white tom with hazel eyes.
Apprentice: Quailpaw

Rainpelt
Small gray she-cat.

Mintstorm:
Light brown tabby she-cat with blue eyes.

Stormshine
Dark gray tom with blue eyes.

Cloudyfoot
Short-furred white tom with yellow eyes and short legs.
Apprentice: Sagepaw

Greenpelt
Dark gray tom with blacks paws and green eyes.

Apprentices

Quailpaw
Brown-and-white tom with pale green eyes.

Sagepaw
White she-cat with brown ears and green eyes.

Queens

Fallowstrike
Brown-mottled she-cat with a white chest and green eyes.

Foxnose
Dark brown she-cat who is expecting Sootstreak's kits.

Elders

Silverpool

Pale gray she-cat with a sharp tongue and hazel eyes.

Clawedpelt

Scar-covered gray tom.

Marshleap
Large brown tom with dark hazel eyes.

WindClan

Leader: Quickstar
Pale brown-and-white mottled she-cat with amber eyes.

Deputy: Marigoldbloom
Pretty gray she-cat with white paws and green eyes.

Medicine Cat: Ravenfeather
Black tom with lighter gray speckles.

Warriors

Longclaw
Pale brown tom with green eyes.

Rabbitnose
Cream-colored she-cat with black paws.

Redfeather
Quick russet tom.

Fluffpelt
Long-haired, green-eyed tom with a gray pelt.
Apprentice: Stonepaw

Icetail
White-and-gray mottled she-cat.

Brooksong
Gray tom with white paws.

Newtstripe
Strange black tom with russet markings.
Apprentice: Crowpaw

Batscar
Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes.

Shellstreak
White half-Clan tom with a missing claw.

Apprentices

Stonepaw
Gray tom with copper-colored eyes.

Crowpaw
White-and-black she-cat.

RiverClan

Leader: Sleekstar - Sleek-furred gray tom with white markings on his belly and green eyes.

Deputy: Dovedapple - Brown she-cat spotted tabby with yellow eyes.

Medicine Cat: Juniperleaf - Pale ginger she-cat with bright green eyes.

ThunderClan

Leader: Hemlockstar - Brown tabby she-cat with broad shoulders and yellow eyes.

Deputy: Aspenclaw - Light gray she-cat with black stripes and yellow eyes.

Medicine Cat: Blazeleaf - Ginger tabby tom with no tail.

~

Rio is too lazy to do the rest of the Clans right now.

Chapter One

Sagepaw swallowed as she glanced at her mentor. "D-do we really have to f-f-fight today?" she stammered. "Why can't we h-hunt or s-something?" The white apprentice was no expert on stalking or pouncing, but those skills were certainly more refined than her battle skills. Even the youngest kit in the nursery could probably take her down, and the youngest kits weren't even born yet!

Cloudyfoot, the mentor, let a sigh escape his muzzle. "Fine. I know you dislike fighting, but it's a main part of being a warrior. You'll never pass your assessment if you can't use your claws," he told her in a sharp tone.

Sagepaw nodded eagerly, a new excitement overtaking her body. "Yay! Thank you Cloudyfoot," she purred, stretching forward and touching her mentor's ear with her muzzle. Then, the she-cat sprinted off into the forest with a bounce in her step. The white warrior trailed behind her, ears folded back and yellow eyes sharp with anxiety.

I bet he thinks I'm a horrible fighter, reasoned Sagepaw. *And he's totally right.* The apprentice came a halt, swiveling her ears back and forth. She angled them toward a bush, where a small rustling sound was echoing out from. *Mouse!* Tiny paws pattered against the ground, and Sagepaw could vaguely catch a glimpse of a small brown pelt.

She dropped into a crouch, slowly slinking forward with her belly pressed against the floor. Her mentor was watching from a few paces away as she prepared to leap. Sagepaw tightened all of her muscles, building power in her back legs. Finally she sprang into the air, soaring as if she was a bird.

And then the white apprentice came crashing down on the forest floor as the mouse darted underneath her paws and into a taller, thicker bush. "Fox dung!" she spat, getting up. "I was *this* close!" Sagepaw held her paws a whisker apart.

Cloudyfoot looked amused. "The mouse saw your white pelt just before you leaped. Let's just head over to the marshes and get some hunting done." Sagepaw nodded and followed her mentor into the forest. She stared off into the trees as she tried to keep up with Cloudyfoot.

The white apprentice noted that the sky was dark as she glimpsed through the pine trees above. *Must be a storm coming. . .* she thought to herself and shrugged it off. They stopped in a small clearing. "Just hunt around this general area, I suppose. I don't mind if we split up; just don't go *too* far." Sagepaw nodded and trotted off into the trees. The pungent scent of a squirrel drifted through the air.

She dropped into a crouch and started stalking the animal as it nibbled on a nut next to a tree root. *C'mon. . . don't notice me.* The apprentice grew closer and closer. The squirrel turned its tiny head and saw her; it's eyes bulged, but before it could run, she had pounced. A thin wail split through the air, and her claws sunk into the prey's flesh. Happy by her catch, she carried back to the clearing where she had split up from her mentor.

Cloudyfoot was only a few paces away, his muzzle open. He glanced over when he saw his apprentice. "Nice catch!" he purred, spotting the squirrel. "Silverpool will be happy to have some squirrel; it's been forever since one came over from the ThunderClan border."

"It was just lucky," the apprentice mumbled shyly, growing hot under her fur. She dropped the squirrel in the center and kicked a couple leaves over it before running back into the trees.

A few missed catches later, Sagepaw was stalking a frog. Its belly was fat and round, probably with tadpoles that would soon be laid. Tail twitching, the she-cat carefully took a few more steps, avoiding a crackly-looking leaf on the ground.

Just as she prepared to leap, something happened. The apprentice lost all control of her body; it was like she was watching through her own eyes. Terrified, Sagepaw tried to let out a scream, but she was trapped. The she-cat could only watch as her own claws sunk into the frog, tearing its body open. Blood sprayed across her white

pelt, and her paws battered the dead prey back and forth.

Back and forth.

Back and forth.

Sagepaw was trapped.

She watched as her body dropped the frog, and her muzzle opened. Scents flowed in, especially one of a familiar smell: Thunderpath. *I got too close to the WindClan territory!* she realized with a jolt. *And I can't make myself go back.*

Sagepaw's uncontrollable self trotted across the Thunderpath, ignoring a bright red monster as it chugged by, hardly slowing for the cat only a pace away. She was choking, choking on her fear and terror and regret and anger. *What's happening?* she asked herself, trying to find the root of this event. *I didn't do anything.*

She was in WindClan territory now. Sagepaw spotted a rabbit, and her body dropped into a crouch. *You're trespassing!* she wanted to scream. *Stop it!* But her body wouldn't listen, and soon her claws were sinking into the supple flesh of the hare she had illegally caught.

And then it all released her, dropping her onto the ground in a pile of fur and flesh. Whimpering, Sagepaw dropped the rabbit and ran up to the Thunderpath. An one-eyed monster hurtled itself past her, screaming and shouting. The apprentice's ears flattened as she prepared to bolt.

She crossed, her paws stinging each time they touched the hot Thunderpath. *Help me.* She jumped into the bushes, wishing she could melt into the ground as a monster sped past. Finally, Sagepaw got to her paws and dragged herself out of the bush. She could hear the angry shouts of WindClan cats from the other side of the Thunderpath. *Oh, Cloudyfoot. I didn't mean to! It wasn't me!* She limped toward the clearing, where her mentor was pacing with a concerned expression.

"What is that scent on you?" he asked, sniffing her pelt. "Did you get

a rabbit?" Excitement lit his yellow eyes.

"Uh, no," Sagepaw muttered. "But I—I think I fell in a burrow or something." She licked the fur on her shoulder, wanting to curl up and die.

Cloudyfoot sniffed again. "Were you in WindClan territory?" he asked sharply, recognizing the scent that hung dangerously on her pelt.

She shook her head wildly, then stopped. Sagepaw nodded. "B—but only because I saw a finch cross!" she lied.

"Well don't *ever* do that again. When the prey touches the boundary line, it's not yours anymore." Cloudyfoot shook his head, looking disappointed. "I expected better from you."

"S—sorry," she muttered, head dropping. Paws aching, Sagepaw could only trail after her mentor as they headed back to camp.

~

Welcome to the newest (not for long, I suppose) CloudtailGrandmas story! This idea was created by Warrior, but this chapter's amazing writer was Rio :) I hope you enjoyed, and make sure to add this story to your library! Whisper edited it.

Chapter Two

Sagepaw and the rest of the border patrol made it back to camp. Exhausted, she padded to the apprentice den to lay in her mossy nest.

She woke up, but Sagepaw wasn't in her den. She was in a forest that looked rather abnormal, to say the least. She thought carefully, not wanting to be mistaken. *This must be StarClan. I should look for my mother's father, he should be here.*

Something rustled in the bushes. Sagepaw quickly turned around, heart threatening to pound out of her chest. *I'm just an apprentice! I can't beat a fox. . . or a badger. . . or a warrior!*

She went into a crouch, scoping out the area around her. She was frightened. *I must fight back. She unsheathed her claws and leaped at the rustling bush.*

"Agh!" the cat screamed, "please calm down, I was part of your Clan before!"

Sagepaw got off him; blood trickled below the tom's jaw.

"I—I apologize. You w—were scaring me." Sagepaw explained, trying to keep her words brief so she wouldn't look like *more* of a bumbling mousebrain.

"That's okay, I was watching how you would react to me." the tom replied, his words precise and smooth.

"Who are you? Are you a ShadowClan member?" she asked, tipping her head in curiosity.

"This is StarClan. I'm a former ShadowClan member," he meowed, hesitating for a moment before speaking.

Sagepaw looked around; tall trees loomed above, and no starts dotted the skies. "I thought it might be StarClan, but it doesn't look

like it . It's too. . . d—dark here."

Suddenly, the tom's entire demeanor changed. "You're right sweetheart. This is the Dark Forest." The russet-furred tom smirked.

"You mean the evil place?" she shifted farther away from the tom.

"Yeah, don't worry. I'm a nice cat. Let me tell you my story." He sat down, curling his tail around his paws. "I had a wonderful mate, and we had two beautiful kits. It was hard for them to live because of the prey-shortage we had." He swallowed as if speaking about it was difficult.

Sagepaw looked at the russet tom. "That's sad, what happened next?"

"There were these two little apprentices—about your size, actually. They would go to the prey pile and sneak off with extra food stuffed in their jaws." He flexed his claws, staring at his paws. "Their bellies grew plump with prey as my mate and my beautiful kits starved!" He was standing up now, each word punctuated with moons of stewing anger. "I killed their bodies and tossed them into the Thunderpath, but the medicine cat saw me. I was banished." The tom's words were weak now. "I was banished, and I couldn't even see my kits grow up."

"That's horrible, ShadowClan i—is so cruel. I never thought that something like that could happen," Sagepaw replied, pity masking her tone. "I'm sorry for your loss."

The russet tom's head hung low as he opened his muzzle to speak. "You should go, Sagepaw; your mentor must be waiting for your return."

"Goodbye," she whispered softly as her body gave way, falling to the ground.
"Bye Sagepaw." he replied.

Sagepaw woke up, a beam of sunlight illuminating her face. *I'm so confused, but now I need to know more! This couldn't have just happened without anyone else knowing. . .*

~

Amazing chapter written by Whisper. Edited by the awesome Rio! Hope you enjoyed.

Chapter Three

Cloudyfoot poked his head into the apprentice den as Sagepaw groomed her flank. "Yes?" the apprentice meowed softly, sitting up and licking down a tuft of fur on her shoulder. "Do you need something?"

"Can you clean out the elder's den?" The white tom's yellow eyes were dark with pity. "You did nothing wrong; we just need someone to do it." Sagepaw nodded and stood up, trailing after her mentor as he padded out of the apprentice den. The apprentice knew that out of the current cats of her rank were much better fighters and hunters than her. So, more often than not, Sagepaw was stuck with all the mundane tasks.

She padded into the medicine cat den. "Uh, Larkshine?" the white-and-brown she-cat meowed tentatively. "Can I have some moss? I'm supposed to clean the elde—"

Her eyes widened as a large, stocky black-and-white came lumbering out of the back of the den. His yellow eyes seemed dazed with sleep as he stared downward at the now dwarfed apprentice. "Moss, you say?" Sagepaw gave him a nod. Larkshine narrowed his eyes briefly for spinning on his paws and tromping to the back of the den. Some leaves rustled, and the medicine reappeared with a bundle of moss in his jaws. He bent down to pass it to her, but as Sagepaw took the moss, he didn't move.

"You visited the place where cats do not have stars in their fur, didn't you?" he inquired softly.

But before Sagepaw could respond, the tom had whisked off into the back of his den.

Heart pounding at the thought of him knowing her newfound secret, Sagepaw padded out of the medicine den, ducking to avoid a sharp overhang. She reached the elder's den and padded inside, eyes quickly adjusting to the low level of light. "Hello," she meowed

softly as cats stirred in their nests. "I'm here to clean your—"

"What are you doing here so early in the morning," complained Silverpool, hazel eyes shining in the den's darkness.

"Yeah, let us get on back to sleepin'," Marshleap added.

Clawedpelt seemed more hesitant. "The apprentice *is* here to clean our nests. Why don't you scoot over to Brokenjaw's, bless his soul, old nest?" He directed his words at Silverpool, who rolled her eyes and stood, head bumping the top of the den as she made her way toward her nest.

She settled into the old moss, letting out a soft hiss as her bones creaked. "Now, get on with this, uh, cleanin' that you're supposed to do. I want to get back in my nest when my eyes open."

Sagepaw nodded and quickly rushed to Silverpool's nest, unsheathing her claws and raking up the mossy bed. "Hey, Clawedpelt?" The gray tom angled his ears toward the apprentice, curiosity lighting his hazel eyes. "I heard some warriors talking about a cat. . . a cat who killed two apprentices in a time of famine. Do you happen to know anything about that?" She collected up the dirty moss, balling it and tossing it out the den entrance.

Clawedpelt nodded. "As a matter of fact, I do! His name was Viperfang, and he was an ambitious young warrior. Always complaining about the deputy, Yarrowfang at the time and never listenin' to his elders. I was only a little apprentice when the apprentices were killed, but it sure struck fear in every cat's heart." The elder took a deep breath as Sagepaw started patting down new moss, combing through it for thorns.

"Well, I was an older apprentice when I was sent to patrol near Viperfang's hideaway. He would kill our prey and attack warriors, leaving them injured and crying for help. I met him, and I was frozen in his shadow. He asked me if I wanted to hear a story, but before he could begin, I spotted my mentor and ran as fast as I could."

Silverpool lifted her head. "Oh, that's not it," she meowed as she

moved back into her nest. "I was a fellow warrior with the cat. He was a good liar, always comin' up with excuses for sneaking off into the woods and traversing around in the night. Viperfang loved to tell stories too. . . he would enchant the young kits with his tales of valor and bravery, when in reality they were just falsities." Silverpool took a deep breath.

Now Sagepaw was cleaning out Clawedpelt nest as Marshleap opened his muzzle to sleep. "I have more to add. . . Viperfang wasn't a bad cat. He would do anything for his mate and kits, and when they had nothing to eat, he couldn't take it. Those apprentices would tease the littler cats by dangling chunks of prey in front of them, then snatching it away. Viperfang never ate either. He would go for suns upon suns without so much as catching scent of the prey pile. He would take some prey just as the hunting patrols would return, and he would shove it to his mate.

"Poolshine would refuse to eat. Since having her kits, she had been too weak to move, and she had gotten it in her head that she would be useless to the Clan after her kits became apprentices. She would refuse to eat too, instead giving prey right back to the apprentices, who gleefully teased Viperfang back again. Those two, Blackpaw and Rainpaw, they were never right in the head." Marshleap shook his head dismissedly.

"Well, thanks for stirring up old memories," Silverpool meowed brightly. "And for cleaning my nest."

Sagepaw whispered a, "You're welcome," but she was still processing the information as she left the elder's den and headed out to find her mentor.

This was written by Rio :) Hope you enjoyed!

Chapter Four

This was written by Rio again! Sorry for the slight delay.

Sagepaw padded out of the elder's den, unsheathing her claws so that the little bits of moss that had lodged there would fall out. *Huh,* thought Sagepaw. *I'm removing moss by shaking my paws to get it out of my claws.* The apprentice smiled to herself at the pun and continued to shake her paws slightly.

"Sagepaw. . ." called a voice. She looked up to see her mentor wallowing in the center of camp. He looked to have just come back from a patrol; his solid white pelt was speckled by tiny pieces of leaves. "What are you going?"

She padded toward him. "I was cleaning the elder's den like you—you told me to, and some moss was stuck in between my claws." Twisting her paw, she showed him the bedding that had been embedded between her pads. "And I was trying to get it out. It tickles, okay?" Her tone was sharp with a bite of defensiveness.

Cloudyfoot looked skeptical, but he just shook his head in disbelief. "Whatever. Well, we're going to go to battle training with Quailpaw and Pinebark." The white tom puffed out his short fur and mimicked her paw shaking as bits of leaves flew off him. Sagepaw stifled a giggle as the pair headed out of camp.

After arriving at the training clearing, Cloudyfoot seated himself on a grassy patch. Pinebark and Quailpaw were sitting a few paces away. "Alright," Sagepaw's mentor began. "We'll start by learning a few moves. Pinebark, can you come over here?" The brown-and-white tom gave a stiff nod and followed the other warrior's instructions.

Cloudyfoot laid himself on the ground. "Pin me down." Pinebark did so. "Now, Quailpaw, Sagepaw, would you say that I am at a disadvantage?" Both of the apprentices nodded, confusion

swimming in their eyes. "That would be correct. But, there is one simple move that can turn this fight around."

Cloudyfoot pressed his sheathed paws against Pinebark's belly. "This move is called the belly rake. Basically, you rake your claws against the soft flesh of the belly. It's very easy to make a deep cut here, so the blood loss and pain could easily degrade your opponent's fighting skills."

Pinebark rolled off Cloudyfoot, getting to his paws and giving his shoulder a few quick licks. "The next move is called the tail yank," the brown-and-white tom began, giving the other cat a gesture to turn around. The white warrior did so, extending his tail. "You sneak up behind the opponent and grab their tail." Pinebark lightly bit down on Cloudyfoot's tail. "And yank it so they stumble and loose their balance." He pulled his head back, causing the other tom to stumble forward.

"That's the tail yank," finished Cloudyfoot. "Now, you two can practice. Sagepaw, you do the belly rake first."

"Al—alright," she muttered, trying to remember Cloudyfoot's stance as she laid down, gesturing toward her brother. Quailpaw had a large smirk on his face as he padded toward his littermate, copying his own mentor's position. Sagepaw swallowed before shoving her paws upward, sheathed claws raking her brother's stomach.

Cloudyfoot gave her a nod. "Good, but make sure your claws stay straight as you rake them. If they swerve too much, you might go onto the flanks, which are less vulnerable to your attack."

Sagepaw nodded, resetting the position of her paws. She started the rake, keeping her path straight down her brother's stomach. "Good!" praised Cloudyfoot. "Now, switch."

After some more training, it was time for a face-off. Sagepaw swallowed, dropping into a battle stance as Pinebark opened his muzzle. "Three," he began. ". . . Two. . . one. . . *GO!"*

The white-and-brown she-cat paused, watching her brother as he slinked forward, yellow eyes sharp. Sagepaw prepped herself for an

attack, taking a few steps toward her brother. He sprung off the ground, flying through the air and extending his sheathed claws. The apprentice was toppled; her brother pinned her down, pressing her small body against the ground.

It happened again.

As Sagepaw struggled to move her paws, her body snapped out of her control. Like a bystander, she could only watch as her head lifted, muzzle opened and teeth sinking into her brother's chest. He let out a yelp of pain, dancing away from her body as blood streamed down his white fur. Still without control, Sagepaw got to her paws and charged, teeth bared and claws unsheathed, at her brother.

Cloudyfoot let out a yelp from where he was sitting, springing to his paws and bolting in front of her. Sagepaw's claws sunk into his pelt, tearing out a chunk of perfectly groomed white fur. Scarlet stained his pelt as he pinned down his apprentice, pressing all his weight on her chest. Sagepaw felt her body drain of breath, but she couldn't do anything.

Finally, her mind went black and her figure went limp and control returned to her body.

Only a few heartbeats later, Sagepaw opened her eyes. Three pairs of eyes were boring into her: Quailpaw, with a splatter of cobwebs weaved through his fur, Cloudyfoot, with a russet-colored pelt, and Pinebark, who seemed oddly calm. "Why did you do that?" spat her brother. "Why *would* you do that?"

"I—I don't know," Sagepaw stuttered. She couldn't bring up Viperfang or the time when she was hunting. There wasn't nothing to pin the experience on. "I wasn't controlling myself!"

Cloudyfoot tilted his head to the side. "Do you even remember what happened, Sagepaw?" Despite his injuries being the worst, he seemed the most apologetic. Quailpaw was brimming with anger, but her mentor seemed to pity her. She shook her head, despite the memory of her own claws tearing out his fur haunting her vision. "I don't know what just happened, but you're going to be talking to

Yarrowstar about this."

Chapter Five

ヽ Hello again! Rio is writing *another* one of these; sorry that you're stuck with me :(ヽ

Sagepaw drew in a shaky breath as she ducked her head, padding into Yarrowstar's den. The tortoiseshell tom, with his pelt that was a miracle and his pale green eyes, was shrouded in the shadows of the little area. A blanket of thick, spongy moss had grown over the ground; the thick roots of an oak were stretching above, creating the cavern that Yarrowstar had tucked himself into.

"Hello, Sagepaw," the tom meowed in a deep, unshaken meow. "Larkshine will be here in a few moments." She gave a short nod, hardly processing the words as she seated herself on the moss.

The white she-cat gnawed on the inside of her cheek as her mind started to run rampant. *I can't let them find out about Viperfang,* she thought with a wave of panic that tore through her body. *They won't understand! I'll be* exiled *from ShadowClan!* Sagepaw couldn't stop herself from standing and bolting. She exited the den, hearing Yarrowstar's half-hearted cry. The ShadowClan apprentice passed Larkshine, whose yellow eyes followed her as she sprinted past the boulder, through the tunnel, and out of the ShadowClan camp.

She flew through the trees, her pelt just a blur through the forest. Sagepaw could hear the loud, echoy pawsteps of Yarrowstar behind her; his heavy breaths were audible as the apprentice tossed a glance over her shoulder, spotting the heaving flanks that belonged to her Clan's leader. As she was facing behind her, Sagepaw felt her face hit something.

A tree!

She had run into a tree. Dazed with pain and shock, the white she-cat dropped into a pile of fur on the forest floor. A stick poked into her side as Yarrowstar's anxiously wide green eyes entered into her field of vision.

"Are you alright?" the tortoiseshell tom fretted. "Do you need help? I can have—"

Now Larkshine's eerie yellow eyes were crowding above her. "She's probably fine," the medicine cat dismissed. "Luckily you managed to hit your head right next to a willow." Sagepaw could hear some rustling as the black-and-white tom turned around and started gathering herbs, Yarrowstar following. The toms' muttering was audible: ". . .why would she run. . . secrets to hide. . . shaded woods. . . starless—"

Sagepaw's thoughts were abruptly punctuated as Larkshine shoved a bundle of willow leaves in her muzzle. The she-cat choked on the bitter herb; she scrambled to her paws, spitting out the sheaf of the plant. "You could give me a bit of a warni—!" the white she-cat meowed sharply, but her words were broken as her body swayed and her mind grew dark with dizziness.

With a touch more of gentleness, Larkshine hooked a clump of the willow leaves on his claw, dangling it over her vision. "Willow incoming," he meowed in a dry voice before giving his paw a shake and dropping the herbs into her mouth.

Obediently, Sagepaw swallowed, and the dizziness slowly cleared from her head. She warily stood up, stretching out her paws before recalling her flight with a jolt.

"I, uh. . ." Sagepaw's mind was blank. There was no excuse; there was no hiding from her mistakes. She would simply have to go with whatever she was punished with. "I'm sorry!" the she-cat blurted out.

Yarrowstar let out a chuckle; Sagepaw had almost forgotten that he was here. "It's okay. I didn't mean to scare you off. Now, with your brother. . . why did you claw him? Did you mean to?"

She shook her head. "No, not at first. Well, not at all."

Larkshine tipped his head to the side. "So. . . so you're saying that it was an accident? According to Pinebark's account, you *charged* at Quailpaw. I hardly think that qualifies at an accident. . ." The black-

and-white tom's eyes seemed to bore a hole into Sagepaw's pelt; the white apprentice shifted uneasily, her brown-furred ears hot with embarrassment.

"I wasn't in control. I can't remember any it," Sagepaw meowed, glad that her statement was at least half-true. "I would never hurt Quailpaw!"

The medicine cat let out a snort. "And, under *normal* circumstances, you couldn't! Pinebark also told me that you had an unnatural amount of strength. Your mentor is one of the strongest cats in the Clan, and even he could barely pin you down!"

She shrugged.

Yarrowstar narrowed his eyes, leaning forward. "Have you had any strange dreams lately?" he asked bluntly.

Sagepaw tipped her head, trying to come up with a lie. "Well, the o—other night, I was dreaming about being in this beautiful forest, and I saw this big fat mouse just sunning itself like a RiverClan elder. I started chasing it, and I was a *whisker* away when Clou—"

"I said strange, not usual dreams," the leader muttered crossly.

Pleased with her antics, Sagepaw ducked her head slightly. "Well you didn't let me finish!" she protested. Yarrowstar gave her a meaningful look, and the apprentice shut her trap. "Well, I did have this weird dream when I was in a whole 'nother forest."

She had to give them a bit of hope. *Maybe they'll fall into my trap!*

Larkshine certainly had. The black-and-white tom was apprehensively leaning forward, his tongue poking out the side of his muzzle. "Was this forest. . . was it dark and mysterious?"

Sagepaw tried to look like she was thinking hard about the question. "Well, there were a lot of shadows. And the sky, there were too many stars to see! It was like looking at one of the Twoleg mini-suns."

The medicine cat drooped with disappointment. "Well, were there

any strange cats in your dreams? A Tigerstar, Hawkfrost. . ." He trailed off.

Sagepaw just shook her head. Anything more, and their suspicions would rise.

Chapter Six

Written by le Amazing Annco.

Yarrowstar sighed, shaking his head. "Fine. You may return to camp, but I expect you to give a full apology to Quailpaw and Cloudyfoot. Understood?"

Sagepaw nodded, relieved that he didn't seem to blame her for anything. As she headed back to camp, her mind was filled with thoughts. Could the cat from her dream have anything to do with her strange moments of paralysis? Did Sagepaw somehow cause this by going to the Dark Forest in her sleep? And, if so, was there any way she could stop the dream from coming again tonight?

She slunk through the entrance of the camp, blushing as cats turned to stare at her. She poked her head into the apprentices' den and there Quailpaw sat, his back towards her. "Quailpaw?" she asked hesitantly.

"What?" her brother asked roughly.

"I- I just wanted to say that I'm sorry, and I didn't mean to-"

"Yeah, whatever," he muttered as he shoved past her. "Just stay away from me."

"Quailpaw, wait!" Sagepaw called, but he ignored her, bounding out of the ShadowClan camp.

"Don't blame yourself," Cloudyfoot said from behind. Sagepaw jumped, whirling around. She felt hot guilt rise within her at the sight of the blood on his pelt. Blood that she had drawn.

"Cloudyfoot, I'm so sorry!" she gasped. "I didn't mean to attack, I wasn't in control, I-"

"I know you weren't the one who did this, Sagepaw. But until we know what caused this, you're a danger, do you understand? You

need to learn how to control this, before you can do any real damage."

"I- I'll try..." Sagepaw muttered, not convinced that she would be able to stop it the next time it happened.

"That's all any cat can ask," Cloudyfoot reassured. "You can have the rest of the day off, just promise to try and sort out this problem, okay?"

"I will," Sagepaw promised. Cloudyfoot nodded and left her.

Sagepaw needed to talk to someone about this, so she headed to the nursery, poking her head through the entrance.

"Fallowstrike? Can I talk to you?"

The she-cat lifted up her head, yawning as if she had just woken up. "Of course, Sagepaw, what is it?" Fallowstrike asked gently.

"You mean you haven't heard?" Sagepaw asked, relieved.

"No... Did something happen?" Fallowstrike asked concernedly.

"Well, sort of..." Sagepaw hedged, and explained what happened during the training session.

"Cloudyfoot sent me to Yarrowstar's den, and I was just so scared that he would be mad at me that... that I ran. I ran out of camp and I wasn't paying attention, so I hit a tree and Yarrowstar caught up to me with Larkshine. Larkshine gave me some herbs and they started asking me if I'd had any strange dreams about starless forests, or if I'd met cats named Tigerstar and Hawkfrost," Sagepaw finally paused long enough for Fallowstrike to say something.

"And have you had any strange dreams?" Fallowstrike asked. "And tell me truthfully, I didn't raise you and your brother to be liars."

Sagepaw's next word burned in her throat, but she couldn't risk telling the truth. "No."

"Good," Fallowstrike said. "Are your brother or Cloudyfoot upset

with you?"

"Cloudyfoot isn't... But I'm pretty certain Quailpaw hates me now," Sagepaw stated sadly.

"He'll forgive you eventually. And don't worry too much about Larkshine and Yarrowstar. They just want to make sure that you aren't a threat to the Clan."

Sagepaw looked up at the she-cat. "Thanks, Fallowstrike," she said as she stood up.

"Anytime you need me, I'll be here," Fallowstrike promised. "Now, go get some sleep. You've had a hard day."

"Okay."

Sagepaw went back to the apprentice's den and laid down in her nest. Please StarClan, she thought, don't send me back to the Dark Forest! She closed her eyes with that thought in mind, and when she opened them-

She was in the Dark Forest once more. The tall, shadowy trees bent and creaked around her, the starless sky seemed to press down on her head. With one thought in mind, Sagepaw ran, desperate to escape this place of terror.

She ran as she had never run before, leaping over logs and wading through slimy rivers, jumping over pointy brambles and ignoring the thorns that caught in her pelt. She ran and ran until, finally, she noticed that the world was getting whiter, as if covered by fog.

Thank StarClan! she thought, hoping that she was finally out of the Dark Forest, but soon she started finding it difficult to breathe. She gasped and wheezed but the whiteness of the area seemed to be choking her and she coughed but she still couldn't breathe and she was getting desperate for air and her lungs were burning and her head was starting to swim and— Sagepaw stumbled away from the whiteness and the air got better, more breathable.

She lay panting for a moment on the ground, simply breathing until her head stopped spinning. Suddenly, she heard a faraway branch

crack from behind her, the direction of the Dark Forest.

"Sagepaw! Sagepaw, come back! I won't hurt you, I promise!" She recognized the voice of the cat whom she had met the night before, the one that the elders told her was named Viperfang.

"I want to go home!" Sagepaw called back to the voice. "I don't want to be in the Dark Forest!"

"You can go home after you come out and talk with me." When Sagepaw was unresponsive, the cat sighed. "Don't make me come over there and drag you back."

Sagepaw knew that she had no choice. She slowly approached the direction that the voice was coming from until she couldn't see the whiteness anymore, and a russet-furred tom melted out from the shadows.

"Hello, Sagepaw," he said. When Sagepaw didn't reply, he continued. "I suppose you would feel more comfortable if you knew more about me, yes?" When Sagepaw nodded, he continued.

"My name is Viperfang," he stated. "Before the famine, I was an ordinary Warrior. I went on patrols, hunted, did everything that you will someday do. After ShadowClan exiled me, I never murdered again. And then, when I died, I was sent here! All because I was teaching two greedy apprentices a lesson!" His voice softened. "I'm a good cat, truly."

"I don't want to be rude, but what's this got to do with me?" Sagepaw asked hesitantly.

"I want to be your mentor."

"My mentor?" Sagepaw asked, confused. "But Cloudyfoot-"

"Can only tell you what he has been taught by ShadowClan," Viperfang interrupted. "I know secrets that your Clan cats could never dream of, battle moves and hunting techniques that could turn even the most mediocre apprentice into a cat admired throughout the Clans for her abilities. Will you let me teach you?"

Sagepaw thought about how she was always the one stuck with the menial, boring tasks and how the other apprentices got to do the interesting stuff. She thought about how great Quailpaw was compared to herself, how she would never amount to anything on her own. And she decided.

"Okay."

"Good. Let's start with battle moves," Viperfang suggested. "Sometimes, in a battle, you can win against a stronger and smarter opponent simply by using a technique that they've never learned. This one that I'm about to show you will work against almost any cat in any Clan. It goes like this..."

Chapter Seven

Sagepaw awoke, curled in her mossy nest, to the pattering of rain above her. Bleariness clouding her eyes, the apprentice rose into a sitting position, her ears poised as shuffling sounded from outside of the den. A flash of white was visible in the dim lighting at the den's entrance.

"Cloudyfoot?" she whispered, voice sticky from sleep as a pair of yellow eyes lit from outside the den. Her mentor moved slightly so that the cloud-spotted moon could cast into the den. He made a beckoning motion with his tail, seeming very off-kilter and uncomfortable. Confused, Sagepaw picked her way out of the den, nearly stumbling over the sleeping form of Quailpaw. The white-and-brown cat wrinkled her nose as the rain wet her pelt. "What do you need?" the apprentice asked softly, glancing around the nearly-empty camp.

Mintstorm, a gray-furred ShadowClan she-cat, was positioned at the entrance, half asleep as she guarded the Clan. Her striking blue eyes made it easy to figure out who she was. A dark-pelted tom was slipping into the warriors' den; Sagepaw guessed that both the tom and Cloudyfoot had been on the night hunting patrol, as both cats had soaked pelts.

"I need to. . . take you somewhere. Stormshine and I were assisting Larkshine in some herb collection, and he asked me to do something for him. . . involving you."

Confused, Sagepaw tipped her head to the side. "Why doesn't Larkshine take me? And it's rainy *and* the middle of the night—can't we do this tomorrow?" With the shadows that danced in the corners of her vision and the eerie wind that was whistling through the pines, the apprentice realized that this would be no typical excursion. Viperfang was plaguing her life; he had infected her sleep, and now he would infect her waking hours. The apprentice had no proof that Viperfang was meddling, but a deep, instinctual, inner voice was teller her otherwise.

"This is urgent," replied Cloudyfoot in a louder-than-typical voice. A shushing noise came from the elder's den. The white warrior's ears flattened, and he spun on his paws, facing the camp exit.

Sagepaw trailed after her mentor, giving a bleak glance at Mintstorm, who was doing her best to stay awake. She kept her pawsteps heavy as they traversed through ShadowClan territory; pine needles crunched beneath her pads. As they crossed the training clearing, Sagepaw unsheathed her claws, letting them sink into the rain-soaked ground and tear up small chunks of dirt.

The white-furred apprentice slowed as the pungent scent of ShadowClan border rose into her nose. "Are we going to stop now?" she asked tentatively, pausing as Cloudyfoot turned around.

The tom flicked his tail over the edge of the border. "See that Twoleg nest?" he asked. Sagepaw nodded. "We're going to go in there. The Twolegs only come 'round in Greenleaf, so there isn't anyone there right now. . . be careful, though."

A lump grew in her throat. *Why would we purposely go into a Twoleg nest?* she asked herself. *Pointless danger.* With a bitter taste in her mouth, Sagepaw placed a single paw over the border. The emptiness of an abandoned forest greeted her as she took a few more pawsteps.

"Scent the air!" called Cloudyfoot from behind the border. "And tell me what you smell. . . is there a cat-scent?"

Sagepaw obeyed, opening her muzzle and dipping her head toward the ground. The pungent smell of a kittypet reeked on the grass, and the apprentice jerked her head back. "There's a kittypet. . . probably male, probably very fat." Cloudyfoot let out a light chuckle, though he showed no signs of completion. With a sigh, the she-cat went back to sniffing. "Uh, I think there is ano—"

The ShadowClan stopped herself. A very familiar smell was haunting the clearing. *Viperfang.* The reek of blood and the bitterness of his mysterious scent was hanging in the air as she took a shaky step backwards.

"What?" pressed Cloudyfoot, his tail lashing back and forth with a hint of anxiety. "What do you smell?"

Sagepaw forced her fur to lie flat, but then an idea popped into her head. "Fox!" she shouted, letting every hair on her pelt leap into a standing position. Cloudyfoot reacted by standing and bolting, his white pelt only a blur in the darkened pines. She could only follow, sprinting through the trees like her life was actually in danger.

Finally, they slowed after swerving toward the lake, to avoid leading the 'fox' to camp. Cloudyfoot turned to her, his claws unsheathed as his gaze swept the trees behind her. "Be careful," the tom cautioned. "It could attack." Sagepaw nodded and turned so her back was facing the water.

"The scent seemed a little stale," she finally pipped after a few heartbeats of staring into the trees. "I don't think it was nearby."

Cloudyfoot seemed to let out a breath that he had been holding. "Alright. Let's get back to camp and get some rest."

ᓚ Brought to you by the possibly second, typically third favorite admin! ᓚ
(also known as Rio)

[edited by le amazing Annco]

Chapter Eight

Sagepaw yelped, dodging to the side as Quailpaw tried to tackle her. He skidded on the grass, though caught his sister off guard and leapt for her again, this time grabbing her by the shoulders and sending them both to the ground. Sagepaw huffed; this was the third time he'd taken her down. Quailpaw had a glint in his pale eyes.

Sagepaw's body tensed, her brown-and-white furred brother still pinning her. She assumed it was going to happen again, for her body to soar out of control and for her to attack Quailpaw. She shut her eyes tight and pushed her ears back.

But nothing happened.

The mainly white she-cat was mildly surprised, and kicked at Quailpaw's belly, sending him toppling off. Again, she assumed she'd lose control, but again, nothing happened. Sagepaw and Quailpaw paced around each other, with Sagepaw feeling rather comfortable with training and Quailpaw looking vengeful. After a while of battling, with her stronger brother winning most rounds, it was time for the two apprentices to head back to camp.

As soon as Sagepaw dipped her head into ShadowClan's camp, she spotted Yarrowstar; the tom's odd tortoiseshell coat well-groomed and sleek. His gaze was fixated on her; a curious look lit his eyes. Sagepaw felt her blood run cold and was about to bolt, but then remembered the last time she did that. It hadn't helped at all. Slowly, she padded towards him, her tail low.

"Sagepaw," Yarrowstar began as she stood in front of him. *What's he found out now?* Sagepaw's muscles tensed, her mind racing will all the bad things he could say. "Larkshine wants to see you." She let out a breath she didn't realize she was holding, her muscles relaxing the slightest. But they tensed again as she registered the information further. *Larkshine? Great, he knows something, doesn't he?*

But Sagepaw only nodded, not daring to word her fears and appear suspicious. The white-furred apprentice slowly made her way to the medicine den, taking deep breaths and trying to calm herself down. She padded in and spotted Larkshine, his dark pelt melting with the shadows and reminding Sagepaw of Viperfang when he asked to be her mentor. She pushed the thought away, though, as Larkshine opened his mouth to speak.

"Sagepaw, have you had any odd dreams lately? Like of mysterious cats, starless skies?" Sagepaw felt her blood run cold, and she froze, forcing her breaths to keep steady. She couldn't say anything of Viperfang or the Dark Forest, she had to *lie*.

"No." The simple word was the first thing that came to mind.

"Are you sure? Perhaps you've seen a brown tabby, with icy eyes? Or a cat similar to that with fire-colored eyes?" Larkshine prodded further, turning to face her better, his eyes glittering in the darkness. Sagepaw shook her head. At least that was half-true, she didn't recall meeting either of them. *He can't know about the Dark Forest.*

Sagepaw thought Larkshine had given up, as he went silent for a moment, but her hope faded like dew in the morning sun as he spoke again. "Sagepaw, don't lie to me. Are you *absolutely* sure you haven't been to a shady forest in your dreams, with starless skies and shadowy figures?" His gaze was fixated on her pelt, and she had to strain to make her fur lie flat. That was the exact description of the Dark Forest.

"No. I'm sure." Sagepaw forced her voice steady, brown ears flicking. Larkshine sighed, giving up, "Alright. You may go." he turned back to the herb storage, going silent. Sagepaw felt a heavy weight lift from herself, and she turned, leaving the den quickly. She couldn't wait and risk him changing his mind and asking more questions.

As she emerged from Larkshine's den, she caught the smell of fresh prey and felt her mouth water. Sagepaw spotted a hunting patrol returning, consisiting of Deerfeather, Addernose, and Rainpelt. They dropped their prey on the freshkill-pile, and the white-furred

apprentice padded over. *Maybe a snack will take my mind off Larkshine.*

Sagepaw sniffed over the newly-caught prey items. A vole, a mouse, and a plump squirrel. She licked her muzzle and chose the squirrel, padding over to rest under the shelter of an arching pine tree to eat. Sagepaw plopped down among the semi-emerged roots, taking a bite out of its fuzzy flank.

The white she-cat twitched her tail, watching the Clan as she ate. Deerfeather had gone to her den, Addernose and Rainpelt chatting about the hunt near Yarrowstar's den. The elders sunned themselves on a flat rock, Foxnose munching on a vole next to the nursery. Stormshine and Sootstreak were both grooming. Sagepaw's gaze drifted above the camp, to the fire-colored sky dappled with clouds. The sun was going down.

She smiled slightly, finishing the squirrel. Her tail swept over the grass as she rose to her snowy-white paws. She looked to her den, and yawned. Perhaps sleep would do her good.

Brought to you by Warrior/WR-87!

Chapter Nine

Sagepaw closed her eyes after a long day of training and hunting, letting her body go lax in her mossy nest. She was finally adjusting to a Viperfang-free life, where the sunlight was filled with happiness and the black night brought only comforting sleep. It had been a quarter-moon since she had last seen the russet tom, so it was a surprise to wake up in the eerie silence of the Dark Forest.

The ShadowClan apprentice, mildly surprised, swiped her tongue around her jaws as she glanced around the forest, waiting for Viperfang to appear. A heavy weight had entered her paws as she stood, taking a few cautious steps away from where she had awakened.

"Have you missed me?" a silky voice purred from behind her. Sagepaw whirled around on her paws, eyes narrowed as she searched the bushes for Viperfang. The Dark Forest tom was not lurking behind her, however. "I'm over here!" His voice was echoing from where she had originally been facing.

"I'm no coward!" Sagepaw shouted bravely, though her voice shook with fear. "Come out from the bushes and face me like the hero you claim to be." After speaking those final words, the confidence seemed to drain from her body, leeching into the black soil beneath her paws. *Where is he?*

Viperfang let out a laugh. "Look up, sweetheart." She did so, and a flash of dark ginger appeared overhead. He was in the trees!

No wonder he could move so fast! I just wonder how he was so quiet, Sagepaw thought to herself, watching as Viperfang jumped from limb-to-limb, slowly descending down the towering trunks. He finally reached the ground, landing gracefully in front of her. Satisfaction gleamed in the tom's pale green eyes, as if he was excited by the deception he had pulled on Sagepaw.

"What do you want?" she meowed, a hint of defensiveness entering

her tone.

Viperfang swiveled his ears around, a smirk lighting his eyes. "You see, Sagepaw," he spoke in his silky mew. "I am your mentor, after all, and I don't seem to understand just *why* you avoid me so much. All I want to do is teach you, after all. My only purpose after being exiled here is to train the future leaders of ShadowClan!" he exclaimed.

A chill rang through Sagepaw's body. She had so many things to say, but she didn't want to disappoint him. *I. . . I liked training with him, but it's so much easier to be a normal apprentice,* she thought. *I liked learning the battle moves that helped me win by fights against the other cats. I liked learning the techniques that made Cloudyfoot feel proud. But, why does this feel so wrong?* The ShadowClan apprentice wanted to tip her muzzle toward the sky and wail her pain out, but instead she coughed slightly, trying to keep down the volcano of words that was threatening to explode from her mouth.

"I—I just liked getting sleep," Sagepaw finally meowed, cringing at her own weak excuse. "It's a lot easier to live like the usual ShadowClan apprentice. . . but I'd rather be the best ShadowClan apprentice."

Viperfang let out a soft purr. "That's the Sagepaw I know and love. Now, I have a very new skill that I want to teach just *you."*

Sagepaw's eyes lit with happiness. "Really? A new skill?" she exclaimed brightly. "Just for me to learn?"

"Just for you," he confirmed. "Now, do you remember the time when you were hunting and crossed the border? You had lost control? And do you remember the time when you were battle-training and nearly killed your brother? You had lost control then too! But that control isn't you being dumb or weak or powerless. You were being possessed."

"Possessed?" Sagepaw echoed softly, the word sounding strange on her tongue. "What does that mean?"

Viperfang sat down, curling his long tail around his paws. "I was

controlling what you did. You could see what was going on, but I was in control. I could push your body to the limits you didn't know you had. I could make you run faster than a rabbit, fight stronger than a badger, and beat *anyone* in battle."

A pang of shock rang through her body. "You—you made me hurt my brother?" she asked wearily. *I should've left while I could!*

He nodded. "It was a test of loyalty. Would you doubt our relationship, or would you become the amazing apprentice that I know you are?" Viperfang's words were asking a question: Would she continue to train with the cat who could 'possess' her, or would she return to a normal life, stuck as a normal cat with normal skills.

It was obvious to Sagepaw which she would choose.

"I'm loyal to you," she answered quickly, nearly stumbling over her words. "I would love to learn how to possess."

Viperfang let a grin rise into his demeanor. "Perfect! The first thing you need to know is how to reach to your target. I chose you because you were an innocent young cat without much mental protection. As an experienced possessor, I could control any cat I wanted, but I picked *you."* This was the first time Sagepaw had felt special. She nodded eagerly. "Now, you need to reach out to the cat you choose. You think what they think, you imagine what they see and hear and feel. You become your target."

Sagepaw closed her eyes, picturing a small kit in her mind. Brindlekit. She was a hyper ShadowClan she-kit who often annoyed the apprentices and warriors by bouncing into their dens and waking them up at night. She pictured the nursery, with the milk-scent of Fallowstrike wafting up her nose. She pictured the soft pelt of Stripekit pressing against her side.

Nothing happened.

Frustrated, Sagepaw opened her eyes, glaring at Viperfang. "It's not working!" she mewed.

Unexpectedly, the Dark Forest tom just nodded. "It is not an easy

skill to learn," he remarked. "You will not be able to do it today, or tomorrow, or by half-moon. By the Gathering, I know you will have possessed your first cat."

ᵕ Brought to you by Rio! I hope you enjoyed :D ᵕ

Edited by Annco!

Chapter Ten

Sagepaw awoke to a paw prodding her in the side. She groaned and rolled over, muttering something incoherent and hoping the cat would go away. To her disappointment, the cat prodded her again, harder.

"Wake up, furball!" Sagepaw opened her eyes to see her brother standing over her. Lifting her head and yawning, she saw Cloudyfoot and Pinebark waiting outside the den.

"What'd you wake me up for?" she grumbled, stretching. "I thought Pinebark was going to take you hunting?"

"Well..." Quailpaw looked down and scuffled his paws. "I asked Pinebark and Cloudyfoot, and they said that we could hunt together today."

Sagepaw blinked in surprise. Quailpaw wanted to hunt with her? Had he finally forgiven her for attacking him?

"Okay," Sagepaw replied, standing up and smiling at him.

"Hurry up! If you wait much longer, we'll be elders before you come out!" Pinebark called. Quailpaw rolled his eyes and led the way out of the den, Sagepaw following.

"Sagepaw, I know I said we'd do more battle training today, but Quailpaw wanted to hunt with you. Is that okay?" Cloudyfoot asked, a deeper meaning behind his words; Sagepaw flinched at his implication.

"That's great!" she reassured him. Now that she had proven herself loyal to Viperfang, he wouldn't possess her again— she hoped.

"Let's go!" Quailpaw said excitedly, rushing ahead of them and out the camp entrance.

"You don't know where we're going!" Pinebark pointed out, smiling

leniently as he followed his apprentice.

"Come on," Cloudyfoot said, following after Pinebark and Quailpaw. Sagepaw turned her head up to look at the sky, half-expecting it to be pitch-black and starless like in the Dark Forest. But the sky was a nice, clear blue, rays of sunlight coming in through the trees and dappling the lazily swaying branches of the pines amongst which they walked with a lovely golden color. Sagepaw yelped as she stumbled over a fallen branch, paying the price for not paying attention to where she walked. She blushed and looked back down at her paws, not wanting to trip again.

"You'll scare off all the prey if you keep going like that!" Quailpaw complained.

"Sorry," she muttered, flattening her ears in shame.

"It's okay," Quailpaw responded quickly, seeming to regret yelling at her. "Where *are* we going, Pinebark?" the apprentice asked, now following his mentor.

"I was thinking we would go to the marsh today," Pinebark said. "Is that okay with you, Cloudyfoot?"

"Sure," the white tom replied, picking up the pace slightly to match Pinebark's as they headed through the trees. Quailpaw fell back a bit to walk next to Sagepaw.

"What was up with you last night?" Quailpaw asked, and Sagepaw noticed Cloudyfoot prick his ears and slow slightly, as if wanting to eavesdrop.

"What do you mean?" Sagepaw asked, silently cursing her brother. Now Cloudyfoot was going to start asking questions about the Dark Forest, too!

"You were tossing and turning a lot, and muttering," Quailpaw informed her. "It sounded like you were saying 'Brindlekit'," he continued, and her blood ran cold. How much else had she revealed during her nighttime visits to the Dark Forest?

"Oh, I... I think I was having a dream about Brindlekit attacking me

right as I was doing something important. You know how she always gets under everyone's paws," Sagepaw invented quickly, hoping that neither her brother nor her mentor would notice anything suspicious in her voice.

"You know yesterday she got mud *all over* the mouse I caught?" Quailpaw asked, changing the subject.

"I heard she got moss scattered throughout the whole camp while we were doing battle training," Sagepaw replied.

"I'm glad we weren't there to clean it up!" Quailpaw joked, and Sagepaw giggled.

"Here should be good!" Pinebark called back to them, and they stopped.

"Let's practice stalking," Cloudyfoot suggested. "Sagepaw, you have to work extra hard to keep your white pelt from being noticed. And Quailpaw, I noticed the other day you have a tendency to swish your tail when you get excited."

"Quailpaw, Sagepaw," Pinebark took charge, "what can you scent?"

"Frog," the two apprentices said at the same time.

"Now, listen carefully. Where is it?"

Sagepaw pricked her ears, hearing a quiet croaking noise coming from behind some reeds on her left.

"There," she pointed with her tail.

"Good," Cloudyfoot said quietly. "Now, what you want to do is find some natural obstacle that will block your prey's view of you. Those reeds should provide good enough cover, but you'll have to be extra careful not to brush against them, or your prey will see the movement and run," her mentor instructed. "Try catching that frog."

Sagepaw crouched down and slowly drew her paws forward, keeping the reeds between her and the frog. When she was nose-to-nose with the reeds, she paused, using the soft croaks issuing from

them to locate the frog. With a slight wiggle of her hindquarters, she leapt through the reeds, landing on the frog and biting down quickly, ending its frantic croaks. She padded back to her mentor proudly, frog clamped in her mouth.

"Good job!" Quailpaw congratulated her, and she dipped her head in acknowledgment.

"That was good, Sagepaw," Cloudyfoot complimented. She dropped the frog and covered it in leaves.

"Thanks, Cloudyfoot," she replied.

"Quailpaw, now it's your turn," Pinebark said. "That wasn't the only frog in this marsh. See if you can find another."

Quailpaw closed his eyes and rotated his ears, listening for signs of prey. "There," he nodded at a small frog crouched under a bush.

"Now, I want you to stalk that frog, and take care not to startle it," Pinebark instructed.

Quailpaw nodded and slowly creeped towards the frog, placing his paws carefully. His tail twitched, but it didn't cause any disturbance as he drew closer. Without a pause, he pounced on the frog, giving it a swift bite.

"Good!" Pinebark called, and Quailpaw puffed out his chest.

"Nice catch!" Sagepaw complimented, and Quailpaw smiled at her.

By the time they were ready to go back to camp, the apprentices had caught a total of two frogs, a bird, and a mouse that they had caught as a team.

"Furball!" Sagepaw teased, shoving Quailpaw lightly as they followed their mentors back to camp.

"Mousebrain!" he teased back, landing a light blow on her head. She pretended to give up then leapt at her brother, knocking him over and pinning him down.

"Ha!" she said triumphantly.

"Ha, yourself!" he retorted, pushing his paws into her stomach and throwing her off, pinning her shoulder. She squirmed under his grip, but he was too heavy, and she finally went limp and sighed.

"Fine, you win," she grumbled. Quailpaw stepped off her and batted a leaf off of her shoulder.

"Thanks," she purred, nudging his shoulder.

"No problem!" he replied cheerfully, and Sagepaw smiled. She was glad that her relationship with her brother had finally been repaired, despite her loyalty to Viperfang. Feeling content with the world and happy about her brother's acceptance of her, Sagepaw followed the other cats back to camp.

This chapter was written by le Amazing Annco, who would like to say how much she loves this book <3

Chapter Eleven

Where am I? Sagepaw thought. Her head ached, and she was nauseous and tired. Pictures flashed before her mind as she remembered the dreadful place. She shivered and looked around, trying to escape or maybe to not encounter Viperfang. Unfortunately, StarClan was not on her side. A rustling came from behind her as a deep, threatening voice spoke.

"Welcome back, Sagepaw," an evil hiss came from behind her which startled her. He looked at the apprentice. "Are you ready for the next lesson?" the tom meowed as he stalked around her slowly.

"Viperfang, I don't want to play any of your games." She held her head high with confidence while Viperfang stalked around.

He stopped, sitting down in front of her. Viperfang ignored her last comment and continued to speak about the assessment.

"Today, you will be possessing this squirrel I have here." Viperfang meowed, while holding the live animal in his jaw.

"I-" Sagepaw mumbled, too afraid to say anymore. She looked at the helpless squirming squirrel that tried to leap out of Viperfang's jaw.

"Let me show you." He crouched and closed his eyes, his breathing slowing as his body went limp. A squirrel skittered out from a nearby bush, its beady eyes glowing as it blinked at Sagepaw. The prey ran back into the bush, long tail swishing, and Viperfang stood back up in his own body. "You amazed?" as he teleported back out, turning back into himself.

"Nope, I still don't want to participate." Sagepaw replied sharply, turning her head away from the Dark Forest cat.

Viperfang narrowed his eyes at Sagepaw. "It could help you get over the fear of fighting," he suggested with his smooth, silky voice. Sagepaw couldn't resist anymore. *It's not disloyal to my Clan... I'm*

just becoming a better *warrior.*

Sagepaw loosened her head, "Fine, Viperfang...I'll do it."

"Close your eyes, and crouch. Imagine yourself as a squirrel... see through its eyes." Sagepaw closed her eyes slowly she started to feel that she was getting smaller.

"Is it working?" she asked, wondering if she was doing it correctly. Sagepaw could feel the world shrinking around her, trees growing taller but her own body becoming small.

Viperfang answered, "Yes, it's working perfectly fine."

She opened her eyes and saw grass from a lower point of view.

"Whoa, this is amazing." Sagepaw mumbled in awe. She looked around, she had possessed her first prey.

Whispering started to come from the woods and she turned back to see a few pairs of beady eyes staring at her.

Why are they here? Why are they chasing me? She asked herself as she ran, scared of dying. The cats were fast, they would be on top of her in a heartbeat. They were big, way bigger than she was. She remembered that she was forced to posses the prey. She cursed Viperfang under her breath. Sagepaw kept running, starting to feel scared of dying, hatred for the cats who were chasing her, and love for her family. *I'm I feeling bad for the prey? s*he asked herself. She climbs up a tree and the cats stop chasing her.

"I'm okay," she whispered, and she gradually turns back to herself.

Viperfang walks up to the tree, and speaks to Sagepaw, "You done well, apprentice."

Sagepaw eyes shook in fear, tears filled her eyes. Viperfang looked towards her, "What's wrong?" he asked.

"I just felt bad for the squirrel." she replied, the tears blurring her vision. "The cats... they were going to kill me."

"You are a cat! You always eat squirrels, that's how you survive!" Viperfang retorted.

Sagepaw nodded, "I'm sorry for letting you down again Viperfang..." and the she-cat started to fade away and awake in the real world.

~

Brought to you by the only Whisper on this account! I really enjoyed writing this chapter. It has a lot of drama :D I really like this book xD

Edited by Rio.

Chapter Twelve

The forest was alive and full of life as always. A bird chirped out its morning tune, a mouse scurried near the roots of a tree, leaves rustled and shook in the gentle breeze. A short furred white tom padded through the forest with his apprentice lagging carelessly behind him.

Her mind felt stuffy, dazed. She stared before her as if numb, a heavy weight on her mind. Sagepaw didn't know why she felt so lethargic, but she believed it might have to do with the possession from the night before. That, or her dreams with Viperfang were just ruining her sleep. Regardless, it was clearly taking its toll now.

"Hey Sagepaw, are you paying attention?" Cloudyfoot asked. She almost ran into him, backpedaling at the last second.

"Yes... of course I am," she mumbled. She shook her head, closing her eyes for a brief moment to stabilize herself. "I just had a bad nights sleep, thats all."

"We're going to do some more battle training, if that's alright with you," Cloudyfoot said. Sagepaw flicked her brown ears, tail swishing side to side. Her mentor sighed, leading her to the training hollow.

As they approached the hollow, Cloudyfoot stilled, gesturing with his tail for her to stop. He dropped into a hunting crouch, and darted away. Sagepaw only had a second to spot a bushy tail before Cloudyfoot stood, jaws wrapped around an unmoving squirrel.

It was as if her heart had stopped. The world around her had frozen. All she could think about was how pitiful it had felt, the fright and constant wariness that clung to her bones as she darted around as a squirrel the night before. The sense of imminent danger, the small feeling of being prey. And now it was, stilled in front of her, never to move again.

"Sagepaw are you alright?" She could hear Cloudyfoot, see him standing right in front of her. And yet she still couldn't move, couldn't breathe. "Sagepaw!" He jabbed a paw roughly into her side.

She gasped, taking a huge breath. Her mind cleared and her eyes sharpened.

"I just felt dizzy all of a sudden I don't know why," she lied through her teeth, knowing that he expected an explanation. "Maybe go easy on the battle training today?"

The white tom peered at her with concerned yellow eyes. "Well we can have a battle training of a different sort." She tilted her head curiously. He gestured for her to sit, and he began to pace back and forth.

"You may not have known this, but a battle requires just as much thought and preparation as hunting prey. A battle is not limited to simply knowing a battle move and performing it on your opponent. It requires thought, a strategy," he began. She settled down, taking an interest in his speech. This seemed useful.

"First you must think of where and who you are fighting. Lets use another Clan as an example. Suppose we are attacking RiverClan. The last place we want to have battle with them is near a source of water. They swim like fish, but are much more awkward on land so we would want to fight them on land, preferably on our own territory to give ourselves the advantage of knowing the terrain.

Second, you need to think about the specific cat that you are facing. RiverClan cats are known to be fatter than most because of their rich prey supply. But even so, there are smaller and bigger RiverClan cats. You need to learn how to analyze your opponent in the first few seconds of the beginning of the battle. Take note of how big they are, and try to find weaknesses that you can exploit."

Cloudyfoot padded up to her, standing completely upright. With her small stature and the way she was sitting, he towered over her.

"What do you notice about me?" he asked. She took a moment to observe him.

"Well you are much bigger than me, as to be expected. You're healthy, so no obvious weaknesses," she stated. Cloudyfoot took a few play swipes at her, his paws brushing the air in front of her face with ease. But she couldn't find anything that would be considered a weakness. He sighed.

"If you were watching closely, you would have seen that I favor my right side when I attack. That means that if you go for my left, I would have a much more difficult time attacking you."

"But how would I have noticed that?" she questioned.

"Get up and I'll show you. Pretend this is the start of the battle," he instructed. Both cats stood in front of each other. She dropped nervously into a battle stance. Cloudyfoot regarded her carefully, and opened his jaws to speak. As he did, she noticed a change in his eyes. His jaws snapped shut and he dropped into a stance of his own. As he did, he gave her a *look*. Then, he lunged.

Sagepaw was barely able to dodge as he flung his entire weight at her. She rolled to the side, his body just missing her. But he turned, claws unsheathed, and let out a snarl. Cloudyfoot stood on his hind legs and swiped viciously towards her chest. She cried out as two connected, and she felt blood beginning to well up.

"Fight back!" he shouted at her, but not with his own voice. It was a different one, one that haunted her dreams. It was Viperfang. "If you aren't going to attack me, then at least dodge!" he hissed, swiping again. The pain in her chest was enough to get her rolling out of the way once more.

"Better. But still not good enough!" He swiped at her left flank and she flinched away, only to discover too late that he had been feinting. His paws landed heavily on her right side and she collapsed, falling into the dirt.

Viperfang followed her, using his weight to pin her down. Sagepaw could barely catch her breath. "What you did earlier was foolish. You need to be more careful to not reveal what we do at night. Your excuses are weak, as is your mind and body. This is why you need me to teach you. I expect you to be ready tonight for another

lesson."

He dug his claws into her for just a moment, pressing a paw down painfully on her chest. Then he pulled back, padding away from her. All she could do was gasp in a lungful of air.

"Sagepaw, are you feeling dizzy again?" Cloudyfoot's voice was back to normal, and his yellow eyes shone with concern once more. He seemed to have no recollection of what had just happened. "Maybe you should take the rest of today off. Clean the elder's den, then sleep. It should do you some good." He herded her forward, and it was all she could do to not flinch at the contact.

She padded through the forest, feeling weak. *I do need Viperfang's training,* she realized. *It's the only way I can grow strong enough to defend myself and my Clan. And if that means I must also learn possession, then so be it.*

Chapter Thirteen

Sagepaw awoke in the Dark Forest, as expected. She crouched down and glanced about her warily, scanning the shadowy surroundings for any trace of Viperfang. As usual, she couldn't find him, and had to resign to waiting for him to reveal himself.

As she was crouched, waiting, she thought she heard a slight rustle come from behind. She whirled around to face him, but there was no one there.

"I'm done playing your games! Come out and face me!" Sagepaw yowled courageously, though her voice shook with fear. Another rustle sounded behind her, and she turned round once again, but here was still nothing there... Or was there?

She squinted, thinking that she could just barely make out a pair of small, beady eyes. Before she could be sure, a full-grown fox launched itself at her and she rolled onto her back under its weight, yowling. Its vicious teeth snapped just claw-lengths away from her throat, and she kicked upwards at its stomach desperately, knowing that the fight was already lost.

Just as she felt its teeth close around her throat, it froze, not biting down. She opened her eyes only to shriek in fright, its beady eyes staring down at her.

"What are you doing?" Viperfang asked, voice bored. Sagepaw tilted her head and saw him standing a few fox-lengths away from her. He seemed to be concentrating on something.

"Wha-what did you do? Why isn't it attacking me?" She asked after she gathered a few shaky breaths. She pushed on it tentatively with her hind paws, but it didn't budge. It was still breathing heavily, jaws tensely held open around her neck. One long drop of saliva dribbled from it's mouth and matted her fur.

"I'm doing what you should have done," Sagepaw flinched as

Viperfang's voice took on an accusing tone. "If you are immature enough to lose your head in a crisis and not use what I am trying to teach you, then why did I take you as my protege?"

Sagepaw actually flinched at his words. Suddenly it was like her previous upset with him had simply turned into guilt; for not practicing, for questioning his every instruction, for being useless like he had just pointed out.

The fox moved off of her, movements very cat-like as it backed up and sat delicately on it's haunches. It licked its chops as it watched her, eyes never leaving her neck.

"You still have a chance to prove yourself," the tom commented slyly.

"But I don't know how to possess anything yet!" Sagepaw replied with confusion. "What am I supposed to do?" Viperfang stared her down from across the clearing. His yellow eyes locked in on her own blue ones.

"Just *try*." He said. And then his eyes flashed.

Sagepaw jumped back as the fox dropped from its sitting position. It collapsed on the floor, pawing desperately at it's head, looking disoriented. She watched with bated breath as it looked up and they made eye contact. Through her mounting fear she could only think one thing- that she had to *try*.

Sagepaw focused on the fox, summoning all her will and strength focusing on thinking on stopping the fox. Her eyes narrowed and she locked on it's form, watching it stumble to its paws as it snarled at her. It wasn't stopping! She wasn't connecting to it...

Once more it lunged for her prone form, and she lost her concentration as she was forced to duck out of the way. But the fox was now enraged at her, and it lunged with more strength than before and she fell heavily onto the floor, it's teeth going instantly for her throat.

This time she didn't even feel it's breath.

"I couldn't do it," Sagepaw sulked.

"But you tried, didn't you," Viperfang murmured. "That was better than before. You just need to keep practicing."

Sagepaw rose steadily to her feet, watching as Viperfang walked the fox away from their clearing.

"How did Cloudyfoot not remember when you possessed him?" She asked him hesitantly. Other questions burned at the back of her throat but she wanted to know the answer to this one most of all.

"When you learn the control that I have with possession, you can choose whether the target remembers the experience. Typically, I choose for anything that I possess to not remember the experience." He informed her. Sagepaw sat across from him, taking in his surprisingly lighthearted stance. She scuffled her paws on the dirt.

"Is it possible to possess in the real world?" The second the question left her mouth she felt like hitting herself with her tail. What a silly question! He had already showed her that it did.

"Of course it is," he answered her out of kindness. "I'll show you all the advantages of using it in your life once you get the hang of it."

Sagepaw had one more question. "If you usually make the possessed forget the experience, why did you leave me to remember it?"

He padded towards her, tail swaying back and forth in a hypnotic pattern.

"You're *special*," he emphasized with a flick of his ears. "Anyone else is not important, but you are my pupil and I want you to succeed. I know that I can help you unlock your potential."

She twitched as she felt a paw nudge her side. Viperfang was still too far away from her, so it must have been someone outside of this dream trying to wake her up.

"I'll keep practicing," she promised on a whim. "I'll show you that I can do this!" The last thing she saw was a pleased look on his face before her dream faded away.

The first part of this was written by Annco, and the rest by Blaze! Hope you enjoy.

Chapter Fourteen

Sagepaw narrowed her eyes.

I can feel it... there has to be a mouse here somewhere. She was hunting alone. It was a chance to hunt for her Clan and practise her new skill. Sunlight filtered dimly through the branches of surrounding pine, the dull greyness from the clouds heavy with rain before still lingering. Her tail nearly flicked in anticipation, a foolish move that would have startled both a thorn bush and the scampering rodent.

Eyes trained on the flowering bush in front of her, Sagepaw opened her mouth to taste the air. At the same time a tiny pink nose poked out from under a leaf. A nose that preceded a slender snout. The young apprentice waited from her spot behind another bush. Soon enough, the mouse was lured by a nut near the centre of the clearing, and Sagepaw was aching to leap over the bush and squash the mouse under her paws. She, however, knew that instead she'd miss and let the mouse run right out of her face.

Creeping forwards, Sagepaw kept her steps silent. Her ear flicked as she paused, eyes narrowing once more. It was time to see if she'd improved since last time she used her 'gift'. Or, rather, *tried* to use it. The white and brown she-cat focused her mind on possessing the mouse, still slowly stalking forwards.

Suddenly, she was hit by how hard it was to control two bodies at once; her own and the mouse's. She had to carefully synchronise her thoughts so that both operated the way she wanted. It was proving way harder than it seemed. Mind constantly flickering between the two options, she eventually collapsed.

At the exact same moment the mouse ran up to her paws, its beady eyes glinting with wild panic. A storm of thoughts clouding her head, Sagepaw just managed to refocus on her own body and dispatched the mouse with a swift bite to the jugular.

She collapsed again as a burning pain worse than any she'd felt before blossomed in her throat. Viperfang's apprentice widened her grey-blue eyes. *It can't be! I'm feeling the pain the mouse is feeling!*

Relief flooded her as she sensed the agony slowly ebb away. She swallowed. There was no blood. *At least I didn't end up like the mouse.*

Written by Saph!

Chapter Fifteen

The agony would not leave her, not until the mouse disappeared from view.

Shooting pains trickled across her spine, shocking her limbs into disorientation as pain that did not belong surged through her system. Her blood boiled furiously as a single sharp jolt crackled down her paws, electric spasms of confusion spitting from her as she writhed to keep control. But there as no blood, she saw, no crimson puddle of harm splashed delicately against the ground, the deepness a sign of sheer horror. She felt the crushing weight of agony, felt it seize her emotions in a single grasp, but nothing evident lay to prove it.

She did not enjoy this feeling.

Viperfang's scent lingered close, she could taste him in the air. Eyes burned into the back of her head and singed her privacy, but she didn't respond to the obvious watchful gaze. She knew her responses to her powers were inferior, that she was held responsible for such a callous reaction. It was simply a mouse, a play thing, a toy eaten after ones dominance had been asserted. It was not a cat, not an enemy, and it couldn't harm her. Yet she feared it. She feared what she could do to it, what warping it's mind and soul would do to her own. Viperfang would be disappointed if he knew, and he most certainly would. Her heart shrunk back.

A twig snapped, and the black spotted tom weaved his way through the security of the shrubbery into the clearing where Sagepaw stood. His eyes dulled back to green after her depiction of flames roaring from his sockets, and in them she saw a glint of satisfaction. He seemed content.

"That was rather impressive," he commented briefly, gazing at the mouse. "You've learned well."

"Impressive?" she questioned aloud, mortified. "I didn't find that

impressive."

"You've still a lot to learn, Sagepaw. You hold your abilities too highly," he warned her, a back-handed compliment.

He padded further away from her, keeping his body long. "I think we need another lesson."

Sagepaw froze momentarily, a little taken aback by the proposition. "Lesson?"

He nodded briskly. "You seem to hold a sharp pair of claws, they could come in handy one day."

Not making himself clear, Viperfang readied himself for movement, shaking the nonchalance from his pelt and unsheathing his claws in a battle stance.

"Today, you learn flash possession."

His moves were hypnotic as he slunk across the clearing, pupils dilated and fixed upon her small stature. Sagepaw felt rather insecure and tucked herself in tight, a tiny demeanour for how tiny she felt. His words slurred.

"The art of quick possession, never taking your eyes away from the prize. Quick as a flash, hence the name. When in battle, you wish you could depict, identify and counter your opponents movements, am I correct?"

Sagepaw nodded, distant.

"You can, young Sagepaw. Hold your eyes close on your enemy, and just like your encounter with the mouse, you shall become them. You are free to do as you please with them, hold them still, tweak their body, anything to help you succeed. But be warned, for you only have a few moments to do this in, so you must choose your moves wisely."

Viperfang stepped forward, devious and determined. "Try it."

"On you?" Sagepaw questioned, baffled. "But I-."

"You'll be *fine*, you'll never know unless you simply try."

Sagepaw grumbled, tuning out of her anxious thoughts and focusing solely on Viperfang. She wanted to impress him, and to do that she'd have to conquer her fears, ignore her demons. She fixed her eyes on his, a cold stare between frostbitten blue and a swirling haze of green. Sagepaw felt her insides churn as she felt her vision begin to blur, felt her body begin to leave her soul. She felt her heart lurch, and soon she was drifting, a sharp jolt locking her into Viperfang's body.

A few moments... What am I to do?

It was as if no time had passed before her pupils shrunk and her mind flew back to where it belonged. A ringing sensation caught in her ears as she stepped back, head pounding profusely. Viperfang tutted with irritation and she shot him a scowl, prepared to try again.

"Remember, only a few moments," he reminded her, sincerity present.

Only a few moments...

Eyes locked again, she saw the flecks in his leaf eyes that brought him to life. Misery hung within those freckles of colour, she knew, and in turned her body to stone. He flinched at her pupil dilation, the surge of disappearance into his soul a quick one. She landed with claws outstretched into his mind, and this time she knew what to do.

Only a few moments...

She seized hold of his head, and in an instant moved his neck to face the opposite direction, away from the action. No sooner had she made her move, she rushed back into reality, her own vessel belonging to her again. She watched in a blur as Viperfang stood in confusion as he was met with his tail, not his opponent.

"You succeeded, well done," he praised her, purring.

He cracked his neck, stiffening. "There's still more you must learn,

but we'll save that for another day, shall we?"

Sagepaw nodded, her mind exhausted.

"Well then," he began, hopping towards the shrubbery he came from. "I think we should end this meeting."

He flicked his tail and submerged into the darkness.

"See you around."

~Written by Hazel, a very short chapter for me, but that's what I like about this book~

Chapter Sixteen

S hadow Warriors is finally back! *_confetti_ * Without further ado, Chapter Sixteen!

Sagepaw awoke to a voice talking loudly in her ear. "Sagepaw! Come on, they're waiting!"

Sagepaw felt as if she were rising up out of a deep murk, and briefly considered responding before exhaustion got the best of her and she decided against it. Whatever, whoever, it was, could wait until she had gotten some decent sleep.

"Sagepaw, *come on!*" the voice said agin, louder. In time, her brain registered that it was her brother's, and she let out a quiet groan; she was still so tired... Surely it couldn't be time to get up? She yelped and darted upright, blinking moss and bleariness out of her eyes as a sharp pain sliced through her ear.

Shaking her head and opening her eyes properly, she realized that it was Quailpaw nipping her. "*Come on!* Cloudyfoot and Pinebark are probably already there! Now we won't have time to eat!"

Sagepaw let out an enormous yawn, her brain too exhausted to try and figure out the meaning in his words; training with Viperfang had taken a lot out of her. What use was training in the Dark Forest if she was too tired to use her skills in real life?

"Sagepaw, for the last time, come on!" Quailpaw demanded, shoving her out the den's entrance. "Pinebark told me to get you up and for us to meet him and Cloudyfoot at the training hollow. I was *going* to suggest that we share a piece of freshkill before we go, but now we won't have time!" Quailpaw let out an exasperated sigh, rolling his eyes.

Slowly coming out of her lethargy, Sagepaw realized how angry Cloudyfoot would be if they were late because of *her*. "Well, we better go or we'll be hungry *and* we'll be late for battle training!"

Sagepaw said, bounding towards the camp entrance.

Quailpaw followed after her, ducking through the entrance. As they made their way to the training hollow, Sagepaw thought back to her lesson with Viperfang. *I wonder if I could use flash possession in battle training?*

As they approached the training hollow, Cloudyfoot's laugh cut through the forest, the response to an unheard joke made by Pinebark. The two apprentices met with their respective mentors at the edge of the training hollow, waiting to hear what they would be doing that day.

"Alright you two, today we won't be learning anything in particular. Rather, we'll be reviewing a bit of everything that you've learned so far. We thought it would be fun to make this a sort of, ah, *competition*," Cloudyfoot said, shooting a mischievous glance at Pinebark, who grinned in response. "The winner gets a day off of apprentice duties," at these words, Quailpaw sat up a little straighter. "And the winner's mentor gets a day off of dawn patrol."

Sagepaw stifled a sigh; she had never been as good as her brother at fighting, and she didn't like to disappoint Cloudyfoot. *But what if I used flash possession?* A little voice seemed to say in the back of her mind.

"Now remember, this is no more than a friendly competition so *all parties* should remember to keep their claws *sheathed*. Understand?" Pinebark asked, with a sharp glance at Sagepaw, who winced under the reminder of what possession could do in a battle scenario.

"Here's how it will work..."

Sagepaw thumped to the ground roughly, hanging her head in defeat. "And the winner of this match is Quailpaw!" Pinebark declared, smiling at his apprentice. "Right now, Quailpaw is in the lead, five to four. Now this next, and last, round is special," he said, and Sagepaw perked up in attention; this was her last chance to use flash possession! "You can win two points in this round. That means

that if you, Sagepaw, win both points, you'll win."

Sagepaw narrowed her eyes in determination; she had to win! "The first one to successfully use the belly rake gets a point, while the first one to successfully keep their opponent pinned down long enough to have the opportunity to have inflicted serious injuries also gets a point. Note that you are only required to keep them pinned down long enough for them to have been sufficiently wounded; you don't have to actually perform the moves would cause the injuries. Understand?" Cloudyfoot asked, looking at Sagepaw with reassuring faith.

The two apprentices nodded, facing off.

"Ready... Begin!" Pinebark called, and Sagepaw made no move to defend herself as her brother pinned her down. She raked at his stomach with sheathed paws, despairing as she was too weak to move him. In a split-second decision, Sagepaw focused with all her might, briefly stopping her counterattack and sending her consciousness towards Quailpaw's. She locked into his being and used that moment of control to twist his paw to the side, hopefully unbalancing him. Returning to her own body, she used Quailpaw's uncertain footing to push him off her, and he stumbled into the dirt, shaking his head in confusion.

"Point to Sagepaw for the belly rake. Come on, Quailpaw!" Pinebark encouraged. Not wasting a moment, Sagepaw shot up and pinned her brother to the ground before he could arise. Still dazed from his apparent mistake, Quailpaw didn't use the full measure of his strength to try and push Sagepaw off, allowing her to hold on just long enough for Pinebark to call time.

"The winner is Sagepaw, six to five! Quailpaw, *what was that*?" Quailpaw dropped his head in shame, resentment of what he thought was his own mistake rolling off him. Sagepaw turned away as her brother was admonished by his mentor, feeling guilt squirm in her gut.

"Good job," Cloudyfoot said evenly, that being his only remark. As the group travelled back to camp, Sagepaw fell back to walk beside her brother, who was trailing behind.

"Hey, uh, you did good," Sagepaw said awkwardly, hoping to make him feel better.

"Yeah, sure," he responded dismally. "Congratulations, though," he added, brightening a little for her sake, and Sagepaw felt as if guilt had punched her in the stomach. She said nothing, hurrying to catch up with her mentor, hoping that by tomorrow Quailpaw would have forgotten about his "mistake".

Are you proud of me, Viperfang?

This chapter was written by le Amazing Annco! Sorry that this chapter was so very late, we had a few issues with the plot due to Warrior's resignation, but now I'm happy to say that Shadow Warriors is back up! (And may I just add how much I really love this book.)

Chapter Seventeen

Sagepaw padded carefully through the forest. It wasn't that she was worried about scaring prey. This land was dead, the soil light and trees only shades of their former selves. Darkness clung to every branch, every crumpled leaf, webbing over everything in her path. The area itself was silent, with no indication of life beside herself.

No, Sagepaw was moving silently because she was curious. Her paws itched to explore the forest in its entirety. Did it reflect actual territories? Was there a ShadowClan Dark Forest, a ThunderClan Dark Forest? Did these skies somehow connect to StarClan?

Was Viperfang keeping her to one area of the forest for a reason?

Sagepaw understood that battle training didn't involve exploring the territory. Obviously. You sat in an area and practiced battle moves. But every time she appeared, she seemed to be in the same clearing, and what little exploring that she did previously was quickly stopped by Viperfang.

Well today they were not supposed to meet. He had given her a night to rest so that tomorrow they could move on to more complicated techniques. So she was going to use this time to explore.

The white she-cat padded between the trees, wandering in a random direction. Most of the forest looked exactly the same, and it was hard to navigate without markers like rivers present, but she tried.

What felt like an age later, Sagepaw slumped against a tree to give her paws a rest. The dry ground burned on the soles of her feet, which were used to a wetter, swampier environment.

"What are you doing here?"

Sagepaw jumped so violently that she slammed her head on the tree

behind her. Whirling around, her eyes were met with a light gray tom who looked around the same age as Viperfang. His blue eyes pierced through her as he waited for an answer.

"Oh! I was, ah, looking for Viperfang. I decided that I wanted a training session today after all." Sagepaw improvised. Her tail wrapped tightly around her paws, and she forced herself to relax her stance.

"You must be Sagepaw," the tom acknowledged, head tilted ever so slightly to the side. "I've heard a lot about your potential."

Her fur puffed, unbidden, at the sudden praise. She sized him up, noting his large frame and broad shoulders. There was a jagged scar running down his right shoulder, a striking mark outlined by his short fur.

"What Clan are you from?" she questioned. He smirked at her.

"...ShadowClan." He offered nothing else. The silence stretched between them, leaving Sagepaw feeling awkward. She was just about to fill the silence with any nonsensical chatter when he padded closer to her.

"You are very determined," he noted. "Not many who come here have the ability to use possession, especially at a young age."

"Have there been many others beside me?" Sagepaw was not stupid. Larkshine had questioned her multiple times about the Dark Forest because cats were always falling to its sway. Maybe there were others who had been recruited and failed. Maybe they were more self confident than her, and refused the training to learn by themselves.

"A few," he confirmed. "Not many stayed."

"Why?" the russet she-cat held her breath. Perhaps now she would get some answers.

Suddenly the world swayed. The tom tilted his head, considering her even as Sagepaw began to panic. What was going on?

"You're being woken up," he explained. "We can speak another time." he flicked his tail and turned to walk away.

"What's your name?" she asked desperately. He only flicked his ears, disappearing into the darkness.

"Sagepaw! Come on, open your eyes you lazy mousebrain."

"Don't call me a mousebrain," she grumbled, blinking at her brother, who had been incessantly nudging her. She peered past him at the night sky, noting the large amount of cats milling out of their dens and whispering frantically to each other. "Whats wrong?"

"Cloudyfoot sent me to wake you. There is a RiverClan patrol on our territory."

Sagepaw's ears pricked. "So we're going to battle?" Quailpaw flicked his tail at her.

"The battle will already be over by the time you wake up!" She hissed playfully at him and he laughed as he dodged her halfhearted swipe at his face.

"Tell Cloudyfoot that I'm coming," she told him. As he left the den, she felt a headache creep up on her. She pulled herself to her feet, ignoring the jelly-like feeling in her limbs from the sudden waking.

Sagepaw padded into the clearing just in time for everyone in the center of camp to break up in different groups.

"Sagepaw! We're going to battle! Be ready." Cloudyfoot ordered her. She gulped, stumbling along after him. She perked up suddenly as she realized something. She could use this to practice her possession in a real battle!

Her feet picked up the pace, following her group into the forest and away from the camp. Her body was burning, ready for the taste of blood.

Chapter Eighteen

Sagepaw's heartbeat was thumping away in her chest as she swerved around a pine tree, ears pricked and alert for any hint of the RiverClan warriors. ShadowClan was named for a reason—they were cats who could hide in the shade, lurk in the night, and remind undetected throughout it all. But RiverClan was built for splashing around in the water, not for the pine forest. And it was this disadvantage that would set them up for a loss.

"I hear them!" hissed a voice from in front of Sagepaw, not distinguishable in the silent forest. Frustrated that she hadn't gotten the chance to help her Clan, the apprentice concentrated, focusing on the sounds around her. *Pawsteps... breathing... faint mewing!* She could hear them in the distance as well.

Growing slightly more confident, Sagepaw broke away from the pack, padding to the front of the group and helping guide them in the right direction. She could almost feel the fish-scented flesh bending beneath her claws, the blood pouring out like the river they slept by. She was ready to fight.

Sagepaw glance at the cat who was next to her—Pinebark. His brown-and-white pelt didn't exactly blend into the shadows, but neither did her white one. Her eyes narrowed slightly, but she didn't dare to speak to him. They both were too focused on following the rustling in the distance.

"Attack!"

But the call wasn't Finchfur's voice—it was Sleekstar, the leader of RiverClan. The gray tom leaped out of the bushes, with a large patrol behind him, and the fighting exploded around Sagepaw faster than she could blink.

Rainpelt had been attacked by a hefty-looking apprentice, who easily battered back the surprised gray she-cat. Growling, Sagepaw leaped in front of her Clanmate, sinking her claws into the

RiverClan apprentice's flank. The ginger tom let out a snarl, forgetting about Rainpelt, who quickly fled into the bushes for a moment of peace. "Run away like your Clanmate, frog-eater," hissed the RiverClan cat.

"Why don't you do the same, fish-breath," returned Sagepaw as she dodged his glimmering fangs. *I've never fought a cat who dodges like this...* The apprentice growled, dropping low to the ground to avoid the white she-cat's blow.

But just as the RiverClan cat ducked, Sagepaw exploded over him, digging her claws into his back. She pinned him done, blood spilling quickly onto the ground. A yowl of agony rang in her ears. The tom writhed in her grasp.

She could hear a voice crying out from the bushes. "Mudpaw!"

She stepped back, only realizing that she had sliced open his belly. "Now tuck your tail between your legs and run," growled the she-cat, blinking as her cheeks flushed with warmth. *I was a paw-step away from killing him.* Sagepaw swallowed her concerns and turned back to her battle, seeking for any cat who she could defeat. She was itching to find a new opponent.

And she was anxious to find a cat with actual skill—one she could try possession on. If Sleekstar hadn't been busy batting Sootstreak and Addernose, she would've given her shot at the RiverClan leader. Sagepaw could see a few of her Clanmates hiding in the bushes, tending their wounds or limping back to camp. *That* won't *be me,* she thought fiercely. *I'm not going to surrender till I die.* Her gaze went back to the field of fighting cats. There was no one to attack.

The small brown tabby that leaped in front of her solved that problem.

Her heartbeat picked up again, pounding loudly in her ears. *What if I do something wrong? It's a lot harder to possess a cat when I'm surrounded by chaos!* But there was hardly any time to worry, because the RiverClan apprentice launched at the ShadowClan apprentice, claws extended and fangs bared. Sagepaw barely managed to side-step the attack and spun around, a grin flickering

in her eyes. *Finally a cat who doesn't fight like a kit.* The other she-cat growled, rearing onto her hind paws as Sagepaw attempted a front blow, claws sheathed.

I need to make Viperfang proud. Her eyes grew steely as the RiverClan cat swiped her ear, a trickle of blood flowing down toward her eyes now. *I don't know what happens if I get him mad.* She shook her head, red spraying across her vision as she swiped at the tabby's shoulder.

"C'mon, what kind of leader lets a kit out of the nursery?" taunted the brown she-cat, batting at Sagepaw. "Yarrowstar, that's his name right? And what are you—Smallkit?" Her vision was growing red again, but it wasn't from the wound above her eye.

"My name's Sagepaw, and that's the last name you'll ever here!" roared the apprentice, her patience growing thin. She quickly dodged a few of the opposing blows, ducking beneath the cat and raking her claws against the RiverClan cat's belly. A hiss exploded from above her, but the other apprentice managed to wiggle away before Sagepaw could continue her assault. "What are you, Bloodkit?" The other cat was splattered in blood, as Sagepaw had now realized, from what appeared to be several flank wounds and some from her previous opponent.

She's willing to kill me, Sagepaw realized with a jolt. *She's willing to kill me because I'm willing to kill her. That's against the Warrior Code, though.* But if Sagepaw could defeat her... she wouldn't have to worry about that if she won the battle for her Clan. But her thoughts were interrupted when the she-cat leaped over her, pinning her down just like she had done to Mudpaw.

"You nearly killed my brother. Don't act like I should take mercy on you. My name's Salmonpaw, and that's the last name *you'll* ever hear."

Salmonpaw's claws sliced into Sagepaw's flanks, and her vision was spotted with black. She struggled to breath as fangs sunk into her cheek, spraying red over her eyes. But Sagepaw didn't stop pushing back; she didn't give up.

I'm not going to die.

I can't.

By Rio. 🌦

Chapter Nineteen

Sagepaw felt her eyes closing, the breath stolen from her lungs. She began losing feeling in her extremities, her struggles becoming weaker and weaker.

In that moment of silence, where her hearing became as numb as her body, she had a sudden clarity in her mind.

Possess her! Now is the time!

Of course! Why hadn't she used her ability earlier?

Sagepaw gathered what little energy she had left and focused on the cat above her. With a solid thrust, she pushed Salmonpaw off her for a brief moment and gasped, vision returning as air filled her lungs. She focused on Salmonpaw, eyes narrowed and dark.

With every fiber of her being, she focused deep within herself on taking control of Salmonpaw's body.

Above her, Salmonpaw froze.

Sagepaw let out a small *oomph* as Salmonpaw fell on top of her.

'Get off me' she thought at Salmonpaw, and watched with fascinated glee as the RiverClan apprentice got to her paws and stared blankly at her.

Sagepaw peered around, checking to see if anyone was looking at them. But no cat was watching, the chaos of the clearing hiding them from suspicious eyes.

As she watched, she noticed one of her Clanmates yowl in pain, and a large RiverClan warrior howling triumphantly as the tom scurried away.

'Distract him for me,' she thought at Salmonpaw, directing her to attack her fellow warrior.

The RiverClan apprentice moved shakily, the possession not completely controlling her limbs. When she got close to her Clanmate, Sagepaw could feel her control slipping.

She snarled, claws digging into the dirt beneath her. Sagepaw watched as Salmonpaw physically shook, but remained under her control.

The apprentice swiped at the warrior, a large gray tom, who took a step back in surprise. The apprentice gave him no time to think, and jumped to action with another broad swipe. The warrior attacked back, his bloodlust forcing him to swipe at her with deadly blows. It took a few moments before he actually caught her scent.

"Salmonpaw? Why are you attacking me? I'm in your Clan!" he shouted, switching from attacking to simply dodging her attacks.

Sagepaw forced Salmonpaw to hit harder, regardless of how she was feeling or how much it was hurting her body. With the possession, she could feel Salmonpaw's body getting weaker. Every time she moved her limbs, it broke her body down.

"Salmonpaw!" The warrior shouted. He pinned her to the ground, using his large mass to hold her still so he could look her in the eyes. Sagepaw had Salmonpaw fighting back fiercely, the RiverClan apprentice going so far as to damage her teeth by sinking them into the Warrior's arm at an awkward angle that no cat would consciously do.

Had anyone been looking at that moment, they would have seen a horrific sight. A brown she-cat, clearly apprentice age, desperately clawing at a cat of her own Clan, a member of her own family, with all the might her tiny body contained. Her eyes bloodshot, her claws more than bloody, and her mind stained forever.

They would have also seen the apprentice standing in the corner, a black and white she-cat with her limbs stiff from excitement watching her enemies claw each other to shreds. Her eyes open in a parody of sanity, her claws digging for blood, and her mind stressed from the forces acting on it.

Only one cat would walk away from this intact.

The apprentice breathed heavily, struggles lessening as the Warrior she attacked finally took the initiative and slammed her head to the ground, silencing her forever.

Sagepaw reeled back, the dying gasps of Salmonpaw echoing violently in her mind. It was different from the mouse, which had a lesser order of thinking and did not live the way she did. Salmonpaw's death had Sagepaw in agony, and, coupled with the sudden exhaustion from using her powers, she dropped down and into sudden darkness.

Written by Blaze

Chapter Twenty

The faint cries of her Clanmates seemed like echoes as Sagepaw struggled against the darkness that haunted her gaze. Her head was pounding, matching the beats of her heart only more demanding as it stripped the thoughts from her mind, the only thing she knew was pain, the pain was numbing yet it controlled every part of her body, she could feel it coursing through her limbs as she fought to stay awake. She felt herself being dragged over the ground, rocks and stray thorns stabbed into her flank but it was nothing compared to the battle she was facing on the inside.

Sagepaw's eyes fluttered open, catching a glimpse of a fleeing figure as Larkshine threw himself back into the chaos, her mind starting to clear as her spirit reunited with her body, the hurt she felt slowly ebbing away. Her headache ceased, and her heart slowed. She got shakily to her paws, stumbling forward in an attempt to walk back into the battle.

Glancing into the fight, she saw Quailpaw being pinned by a tom much larger than the ShadowClan apprentice. Quickly, Sagepaw focused on the RiverClan foe, her eyes absorbing the bloodlust in his eyes as he lunged towards her littermate. At the last moment, she felt the strength of the tom in her limbs, twisting him around. He lost his footing and crashed into a tangle of thorns, letting out a yowl as Sagepaw's mind returned to her shaking form.

Her eyes landed on a young RiverClan She-cat, who was hiding in the bushes, fear plastered on her face. Sagepaw gave a small grin and stalked up behind her newfound prey. Instead of leaping, her eyes locked on the crouching form of the other cat, her possessions had ripped away her strength, she would be no match for even this cat, cowardly watching as her clanmates spilled their blood. Hopefully, at least with the last of her vitality, she could force this she-cat into the battle.

Fixating all her mental abilities on the foe she willed herself into the opposing body, feeling her breathing quicken she instantly

realized it wasn't her own, but the RiverClan scum in front of her that she was feeling, the panic in her chest seeming there yet not as her spirit fought for control. *Go,* Sagepaw ordered the she-cat's body, *fight.* The ShadowClan apprentice raised her eyes to the other cats.

Suddenly it dawned on her how strange it would seem for two of them to just suddenly attack their own clanmates, their own family. Sagepaw let out a hiss, *then I guess you'll just have to fight one of my own...* Spotting Cloudyfoot - ready to launch himself back into the turmoil - Sagepaw smirked. She watched at the RiverClan cat ran over to her mentor, trembling as if trying to fight her way back into control. The opponent unsheathed her claws, batting weakly at the tom she faced. He hissed, ducking his head, jaws open and ready to return the attack.

Before any of them could even blink, she heard a wail, a cry full of grief and confusion. *Why?* it seemed to ask, *why has this happened?* "S-Salmonpaw! Salmonpaw is dead! Shellclaw killed her!" a cat yowled, voice shaking.

Sagepaw froze, eyes full of disbelief. *Salmonpaw.* an image of the RIverClan apprentice flashed in her head, *is dead?*

She took a step back, her mouth gaping wide with horror. The mental connection broke and she was vaguely aware of the she-cat she had controlled escaping from the astonished figure of Cloudyfoot and running back towards her own territory.

Her own actions suddenly clicked in her mind - she had forced the apprentice to fight her own Clanmate... Shellclaw, *he must've lashed out in defense... he, he killed her?* Suddenly it all hit her like a wave, the pain, it never quite registered in her mind of why it had all hurt so much. She assumed Salmonpaw had been injured and fled as her controller collapsed. Sagepaw let out a choked whimper. *What have I done?* The RiverClan apprentice hadn't even lived her life, she would never have a mate, never bear kits, never even get named a warrior and be able to show her Clan her true potential.

The gathered cats still stood in shock, unsure of what to do next. Sleekstar was the first to step forward, dipping his head at the

grieving cats around the still form of the dead apprentice. "RiverClan, we're going home. Nobody has won this battle today, we have all lost." and with that he nodded to his cats and turned tail, walking somberly back towards his own camp. Several cats moved to pick up Salmonpaw, quickly following after their leader.

Sagepaw stood still, her mind in complete shock, how had it all gone so wrong? She didn't understand, this was supposed to make her a better warrior, but how could that happen when she had so carelessly shattered the code? She stared at her feet, blank, her claws were coated in blood, dark and ominous, light glinting off the dried flecks that stuck to the soft fur of her paws.

Her emotions threatened to show themselves, to pour out, she wanted to scream, cry, but no, she would be strong, she would make Viperfang proud. But as she stood there her legs continued to tremble, feeling weak and unstable, like a branch being forced from the core of a tree by the whipping wind.

She slowly looked up, observing Finchfur as he flicked his tail, ordering the ShadowClan cats to do the same as their enemies had, head back to camp. Sagepaw stared blankly after her clanmates as they dispersed, the weight of what she had done sending her world crashing around her. Cloudyfoot gave her a concerned look but carried on, glancing back once more as Sagepaw, tail down, trailed behind him.

Hey, guys, it's your, not, favorite Admin Moon, oml look I updated are you proud I'm trying please love me.

What do you guys think of the chapter? I haven't written in awhile so hopefully, it's okay. -Moon